

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 187309

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MV

SUBJECT:BRITISH RESPONSE TO GOM ABROGATION OF GAN AGREEMENT

REF: A) COLOMBO 2592; B) LONDON 10232

1. BRITISH POL COUNSELOR SCOTT CALLED ON DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY DUBS JULY 23 TO PRESENT SPEAKING NOTE OUTLINING BRITISH RESPONSE TO MALDIVIAN INTENTION TO TERMINATE 1965 ANGLO-MALDIVIAN DEFENSE AGREEMENT.

2. NOTE REVIEWS EARLY GOM ASSURANCES THAT AGREEMENT, INCLUDING ITS THIRD PARTY EXCLUSION PROVISION, WOULD REMAIN OPERATIVE AFTER RAF WITHDRAWAL FROM GAN. FOLLOWING MARCH 31 WITHDRAWAL, HOWEVER, MALDIVIANS NOTIFIED HMG IN MAY 9 LETTER FROM PRESIDENT NASIR TO PRIME MINISTER THAT AGREEMENT WAS ENDED, DECISION WHICH NOTE ATTRIBUTES TO FINANCIAL
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STRAIN FOR GOM OF MAINTAINING GAN. NOTE ACKNOWLEDGES

MALDIVIAN APPROACHES TO OTHER GOVERNMENTS, IRAN IN PARTICULAR, ADDING THAT GOM HAS NOT RULED OUT IRANIAN AIR BASE GIVEN IRANIAN INQUIRIES ABOUT POSSIBLE HMG OBJECTIONS TO MOVING INTO GAN. BRITISH APPEAR UNWILLING TO OBJECT TO THIS DEVELOPMENT ON GROUNDS, AS STATED BY NOTE, THAT "IT COULD BE EMBARRASSING TO OUR RELATIONS WITH THE SHAH" TO STAND ON

RIGHTS UNDER THE 1965 AGREEMENT.

3. BRITISH POINT OUT THAT THE AGREEMENT MAKES NO PROVISION FOR UNILATERAL TERMINATION BUT STATE THAT A STRICTLY LEGAL POSITION WOULD HAVE LITTLE INFLUENCE ON NASIR'S ATTITUDE. IN ANY EVENT, NASIR IS SAID TO BE "INTENSELY NATIONALISTIC AND SUSPICIOUS OF FOREIGNERS AND WE DO NOT BELIEVE HE WOULD IN PRACTICE BE READY TO GRANT MILITARY FACILITIES TO ANYONE SO LONG AS HE SEES ANY ALTERNATIVE COMMERCIAL FUTURE FOR GAN".

4. NOTE EXPRESSES UNDERSTANDING OF U.S. CONCERN THAT UNFRIENDLY POWER COULD MOVE INTO THE MALDIVES BUT SEES "VERY LITTLE CHANCE" THAT ANOTHER POWER "INIMICAL TO OUR INTERESTS" WILL REPLACE THE BRITISH. NOTE ARGUES THAT BEST CHANCE TO RETAIN INFLUENCE WITH GOM IS TO GO ALONG WITH TERMINATION OF AGREEMENT. BRITISH THEREFORE INTEND TO REPLY TO NASIR THAT, WHILE RESERVING ON MALDIVIAN RATIONALE, HMG WILL CONCUR WITH TERMINATION. BRITISH, HOWEVER, WILL ALSO OFFER THREE MILLION POUNDS OF PROJECT AID OVER 3 TO 5 YEAR PERIOD, WITH NOTE HINTING STRONGLY THAT ADDU ATOLL (GAN) WILL RECEIVE PRIORITY.

5. SCOTT DID NOT ELABORATE ON NOTE, COPY OF WHICH BEING POUCHED TO COLOMBO AND LONDON. DUBS PROMISED A RESPONSE TO SCOTT AFTER DEPARTMENT HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY THE MATTER FURTHER. KISSINGER

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